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Maine State Government Bioterrorism Fact Sheet, 2001

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Maine State Government Bioterrorism Fact Sheet



Prepared by the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health; Department of Public Safety; Department of Defense, Veteran's and Emergency Management's Maine Emergency Management Agency

Q. Have any suspicious packages in Maine tested positive for anthrax?

A. No. **NONE** of the several dozen packages and substances that have been tested in Maine over the past week have tested positive for anthrax or any other chemical or biological agent.

Q. What makes a package suspicious?

- A.**
- Generally, a suspicious package or piece of mail contains at least one of the following:
 - Unexpected dusts, powders, stains, discolorations, residues, liquids, solid materials, and/or foreign objects;
 - An unusual odor or smell (do not intentionally sniff packages!);
 - A threat or an implied threat;

Often suspicious packages may also have:

- No return address,
- The address of someone no longer at that address,
- Evidence of being disturbed,
- An unusual shape or weight,
- Been marked as "Personal" or "Confidential", or
- A postmark that does not match the return address.

Q. What should I do if I encounter a suspicious package?

- A.**
- Stop handling the package; do NOT sniff the package;
 - Place the package in a container or place a waste container over it;
 - Exit the immediate area and ask others to do the same;
 - Wash your hands and other areas of exposed skin vigorously with soap and water.
 - **911** -- Call 911.

Q. What are 4 facts I should know about anthrax?

- A.** Anthrax is:
- Not contagious;
 - Treatable, especially when caught early, or is the common skin form;
 - Very difficult to effectively aerosolize from an envelope or package;
 - Very difficult to contract through one's skin unless one has an open sore and/or does not wash one's hands after handling it.

Q Who should be considered for testing or treatment for anthrax?

A. In general, the only people the Bureau of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta recommend consideration of nasal swab testing and/or treatment for anthrax are those who may have been exposed to a substance that has tested positive for anthrax.

The Bureau of Health is also asking all health care providers who are considering testing or treating someone for anthrax exposure to call the Bureau first for consultation.

No one in Maine so far has fit the criteria for testing or treatment.

Q. What are the roles of the various state agencies involved in addressing bioterrorism?

A. The Maine Emergency Management Agency is responsible for:

- Coordinating emergency response;
- Tracking incidents and situations;
- Providing guidance and direction to response organizations;
- Reporting test results back to originating organizations.

The Maine Department of Public Safety is responsible for:

- Assisting and coordinating the law enforcement response in Maine, including working with local and county law enforcement and public safety agencies.

Maine Department of Human Services' Bureau of Health is responsible for:

Early Detection:

- Assuring Maine has a good system for early detection and responsiveness to diseases that could be caused by biological weapons by providing 24-hour health alert systems and outreach to health care providers;

Education:

- Educating Maine's health care providers on diseases that could be caused by biological weapons through face-to-face meetings, printed materials, web site information and 24-hour consultation services;

Incident Management:

- Assisting MEMA and other state agencies with public health and medical guidance to local agencies as well as the testing of suspicious substances through the DHS Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory.

Key Maine Contacts Regarding Bioterrorism Include

The Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health: Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH;
Director, Bureau of Health: (207) 287-3270

Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management: Department of Defense,
Veterans and Emergency Management Duty Officer: 1-800-452-8735

Department of Public Safety: State Police Headquarters, Augusta Maine: (207) 624-7000 / 1-800-452-4664